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After IFOR:

Maintaining a Fragile Peace in the Balkans

by Charles Barry

Conclusions

- NATO's firm commitment to complete its military mission in Bosnia and withdraw Implementation Forces (IFOR) in 12 months time means that strategic planners should already be thinking about the post-IFOR period.
- IFOR will leave behind a fragile peace. Some civilian objectives are almost certain to be delayed, if only due to formidable logistics and technical obstacles. As a result, preserving peace could mean a longer military presence.
- A force smaller than IFOR but more robust than traditional UN peacekeeping forces could be required for another 1-2 years in order for peace to last.
- Three planning factors are pivotal to an IFOR follow-on force. First, U.S. ground combat forces will be withdrawn, or at least sharply reduced. Second, substantial NATO and U.S. resources will be required to support any follow-on force. Third, like IFOR, a follow-on force needs to be strictly limited in mission and duration.
- If an IFOR follow-on force is needed, options include:
 1. A second, smaller NATO-led force (IFOR II). Both U.S. and Russian ground combat forces could be withdrawn.
 2. A Western European Union (WEU) directed force. The WEU could supplant NATO, using NATO's concept for a WEU-led Combined Joint Task Forces (CJTF).
 3. A Gulf War-style ad hoc coalition. A European-led coalition could be formed under a lead nation, such as the United Kingdom or France.
- Of these options, only a NATO-led force would be capable of enforcing peace by December 1996, when IFOR redeploys.
- After civilian implementation takes hold, any continuing military presence should be reduced to traditional peacekeeping forces or observers, under the UN or the Organization on Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

Assessing Post-IFOR Missions

A post-IFOR force might be considered if some IFOR missions had to continue beyond 12 months. IFOR's missions are defined in Annex 1A (Agreement on the Military Aspects of the Peace Settlement) of the Dayton Agreement. The essential peace enforcement tasks can be summarized as follows:

- Enforce continuation of the October 5, 1995 cessation of hostilities.
- Establish and enforce the Zone of Separation (ZOS) and other boundaries.
- Enforce the transfer of territories agreed to at Dayton.

The intent of IFOR's military tasks is to create the broad security environment needed to accomplish the political, economic and social reconstructions which are the keys to lasting peace. IFOR has defined its support for civilian implementation as being to:

Help create secure conditions for the conduct of non-military tasks by others.

- Assist the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and other international organizations in humanitarian missions and movement needs.
- Assist in the observation and prevention of interference in the movement of civilian populations and refugees, and respond appropriately to deliberate violence.
- Assist in the monitoring and clearance of minefields and obstacles.

Civilian implementation of the Dayton Agreement, on which sustained peace depends, will take far longer than IFOR's own mission. Therefore, an important question is, 'will a continued military presence be required in order to maintain the security essential to civilian implementation?' That is, how long will peace *enforcement* be necessary? If potentially longer than IFOR's deployment, a follow-on force should be considered.

The Acceptable End State for IFOR

When IFOR withdraws, world leaders will want to be satisfied that peace is durable and that new institutions can survive IFOR's departure. Civilian undertakings within the first 12 months bear heavily on the chances for continued peace. The list of tasks includes: restoration of key services, holding free and fair elections, establishing basic institutions of government, and concluding arms control agreements.

For the general population, attributes of lasting peace include freedom of movement (including for refugees), respect for human rights, and the return of, or compensation for, real property. Also, economic reconstruction and reemployment must have commenced. These goals are daunting given the climate of suspicion and lack of cooperation, including between Bosnian Muslims and Croats within the Federation.

An issue outside of the Dayton Agreement is the equipping and training of Federation forces. The United States believes arms control agreements alone cannot achieve a military balance; and that Federation

forces will need additional arms and training to establish parity and provide for self-defense. To this end, the United States may pledge \$100 million in military equipment. Although not IFOR's mission, establishing a military balance has become a task to be completed before external forces can be withdrawn.

Can Dayton's Incentives Alone Keep Peace After IFOR?

It is still too early to know that a follow-on force will be necessary; it may not. The Dayton Agreement provides many incentives for the parties to avoid conflict after IFOR departs. Most important is the international commitment to assist in reestablishing a peaceful, functioning society. The lifting of economic sanctions and the reopening of commerce with the outside world are other incentives.

The presidents of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia and Croatia all *agreed* to the Dayton plan and are expected to live up to their commitments. The population is weary of war and wants peace. Bringing identified war criminals to justice helps alleviate the sense of unrequited injustices that could renew fighting. These realities offer hope for a peace that will be honored without external enforcement.

There are also strong *disincentives* for returning to war. Besides IFOR's enforcement, there are the threats of reimposition of sanctions, the suspension of international aid for reconstruction, legal actions against perpetrators of war crimes, and diplomatic isolation from the international community.

Against this array of carrots and sticks are the horrors and hatreds of the recent war, continuing distrust, competing political agendas, and desires to right perceived injustices by force. It is generally accepted that almost all Bosnian Serbs and many Bosnian Croats, given a choice, would have rather integrated with kindred neighboring states. All parties gave up territory they remain convinced is rightfully theirs. Besides the physical ravages of war and the deep scars of human loss, each side's outrages may heal slowly, too. These are the hallmarks of centuries-old Balkan conflicts that no previous resolution has overcome.

NATO's Alternatives for December, 1996

In broad terms, NATO will have to choose among three courses of action at the conclusion of Operation Joint Endeavor:

- First, withdraw IFOR as planned, leaving the parties to maintain peace under the pressure of public scrutiny and international economic and political leverages (carrots and sticks). Should war resume, NATO would face tough choices: either renewed diplomatic efforts and humanitarian aid to contain spillover, or contemplate new military interventions. If the probability of renewed conflict is high, withdrawal of IFOR could put peace at too great a risk.
- Second, extend IFOR's deployment. Although not open for discussion today, an extension of IFOR might be agreed if the risks to peace are too high. NATO members could reach consensus to leave IFOR in place until an unmonitored peace can be entrusted to the parties themselves.
- Third, opt to enforce peace beyond IFOR by leaving a residual force or follow-on force--an IFOR II operation--with the intent of putting more time between the recent war and an unchaperoned peace. This approach should be considered if real doubts linger about the ability of the parties to remain peaceful without an international force between them.

By the time IFOR begins to withdraw in the Fall of 1996, NATO must decide if the first option--removal of all interpositional forces--creates too high a risk of renewed conflict. Contrapuntally, political realities in the United States and elsewhere appear to preclude the second option, i.e., postponing any IFOR withdrawal. The third option--providing a residual or follow-on force--could become NATO's likely course of action.

A key part of IFOR's exit strategy is the one year deadline. That puts pressure on the parties to work rapidly toward peace, and not to become dependent on outside forces that will eventually be resented. Therefore, too early a decision to commit a follow-on force will undercut momentum needed for civilian implementation.

Conversely, experience suggests that the period of redeployment could be marked by eroding stability and increased danger for IFOR. In Somalia, UN and U.S. forces had to be extracted by heavy relief forces. In Bosnia, a decision to continue an international presence should be made and publicly acknowledged long before IFOR begins to redeploy.

Examining IFOR Follow-on Force Options

If an IFOR follow-on force is necessary, the first task will be determining the type and size of force required. Will a traditional peace keeping force be sufficient? Conversely, a force similar to but smaller than IFOR--with a continuing peace enforcement mission--may be required. Enforcement force models include:

- Another NATO-led force (IFOR II). An IFOR II force could be smaller, but the actual size depends on what it takes to maintain a secure environment and on the need for force self-protection. The United States would continue to participate under NATO with whatever support forces were required for IFOR II to succeed. That is likely to include just-over-the-horizon air and naval forces, and perhaps a ground reaction force. Other key U.S. assets needed are logistical resources and C4I. Presumably the IFOR II force would be commanded by a European, however, it would be a NATO-directed force, reporting either directly through SACEUR or the AFSOUTH commander.
- A force under the WEU. A WEU-led force has been proposed within NATO's draft concept for a WEU-led CJTF. In essence, the WEU would assume control from NATO of the operation in Bosnia, and receive significant NATO and U.S. backing to ensure its success. However, the WEU is not capable of taking over NATO's mission in Bosnia, and would need lengthy preparation time to assume such a role. In addition, the recent French shift toward working for a European identity within the Alliance suggests that there may be little interest on either side of the Atlantic for testing the WEU in Bosnia.
- A European-led coalition. An ad hoc force could be assembled, much like the U.S.-led coalition in the Persian Gulf War. This choice is likely should there be disagreement among the allies over use of NATO. However, opting for a coalition probably signals a serious trans-Atlantic rift, and poses significant operational challenges as well. Could France or the United Kingdom govern an international coalition and enforce peace like the United States did in the Gulf? Would the United States exercise a right to review or question decisionmaking? What would be Russia's role?

Long Term Bosnian Peace and NATO's Exit Strategy: An OSCE Role?

An IFOR II force may extend the security environment essential to reconstruction efforts, but then what will be the end game for NATO? The answer could be that NATO incrementally reduces its presence while gradually shifting from a U.S.-led to a European-led force. That would demonstrate NATO's flexibility in non-Article 5 operations, as well as provide a look at a European crisis management capability within NATO. If momentum can be maintained toward peace, NATO should be able to turn its mission over to a traditional UN-style peacekeeping force in one to two years. A worthwhile objective would be to organize, fund and administer such a force, not under the UN which has become overstretched, but under the OSCE.

The Broader Impacts of Bosnian Peace Implementation

While the challenge of deploying IFOR is all-consuming, IFOR itself is just part of a more enduring strategic exertion, one to define new trans-Atlantic roles and relationships for a new era. How Bosnia's peace is secured will have significant impact on the roles of NATO, WEU, EU, and OSCE, as well as U.S.-European relations and NATO's relations with Russia. Therefore, embedding broader objectives, such as OSCE peacekeeping and a Europe more responsible for its own crisis management, should not be seen as mere theorizing.

There may be simpler solutions than working through the WEU and OSCE, but they may not help get us where we ultimately want to go. For the United States and NATO, handing Bosnia's long term stability over to other institutions is likely the only exit strategy from a region every bit as complex as the Middle East or Central Asia. Bosnia is destined to absorb a lot more of the outside world's time and resources on its long and problematic path toward normalcy. To avoid a protracted fate in Bosnia, NATO must develop a realistic exit strategy, and then refine it as events unfold. That could mean a follow-on enforcement role as a bridge to traditional peacekeeping, and, ultimately, to independent self-governance.

Recommendations

- Long range political and military planners should immediately begin to consider the need for a follow-on force to relieve IFOR in 12 months time. The first question should be, 'is a follow-on force needed in order for peace to survive after IFOR?'
- NATO should examine adjusting IFOR to delete most or all U.S. and Russian combat forces, and establishing a smaller, still robust IFOR II. As part of a NATO exit strategy, Europeans should prepare to lead and the United States should prepare to support an IFOR follow-on force for up to two years beyond the present IFOR mission.
- The duration of an IFOR II mission should be conditions-dependent. As a minimum, the conditions for withdrawal should be a state of reduced tensions that allows for hand-over to a traditional peacekeeping force, perhaps under OSCE.
- The OSCE should be furthered as the agency to fund and manage a traditional peacekeeping force or observer mission in Bosnia. The aim should be to set the precedent of downloading UN peacekeeping burdens where mature regional organizations are available.
- A European led coalition under a lead nation should be avoided, as it creates both political and military C2 challenges, and sidelines European institutions needed to advance into new roles.

Lieutenant Colonel Charles L. Barry, U.S. Army, is a senior military fellow at the Institute for National Strategic Studies. For more information his telephone number is (202) 287-9210, ext. 540, fax (202) 287-9239, Internet: barryc@ndu.edu.NOTE

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